**MINISTRY**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

 **REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (NA)**

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**82. Mr M Hlengwa (IFP) to ask the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation**:

What are the details of the (a) phone call she had with the newly appointed United States Secretary of State, Mr AJ Blinken, and (b) issues regarding Africa that were discussed? **NW85E**

**REPLY:**

1. Both principals underscored the importance of the bilateral relationship. The US Government acknowledged South Africa as an indispensable partner and remarkable global player, as well as an important commercial partner for the US. In the area of health, South Africa acknowledged the US support for PEPFAR, which has been impactful in South Africa and the region.

Covid-19 pandemic (US): The Biden Administration has committed to working with partners in international institutions, including on continental issues. Within the World Health Organisation (WHO) context, the US has joined the COVAX initiative and will also work with other multilateral institutions to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. The US also wants to address global health security and work on climate impact with other countries.

South Africa welcomed the decision by the Biden Administration to re-join the WHO and the COVAX initiative. The US aproach aligns with South Africa’s position that there should be equitable and affordable distribution of vaccines. The focus on global health will assist to prepare less developed countries, including in Africa, to better prepare for the next pandemic, when it occurs. Mitigating the impact of climate change is also priority for South Africa and therefore the importance that the US is placing on this matter, including within the multateral context, is welcomed.

**China:** The US Government will adopt a more nuanced approach towards China, but the tensions with China are expected to continue under the Biden Administation. It was conveyed that South Africa and China enjoy good relations and that it was important to ensure that all countries, including the US, China and Russia, work jointly to assist those who are least able to help themselves. The Secretary displayed a willingness to further discuss this matter with South Africa.

1. According to Secretary Blinken, Africa will be a priority for the Biden Administration. South Africa raised the World Trade Organisation (WTO) position for Director-General and requested that the US Government support the candidature of former Nigerian Finance Minister, Ms Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who was opposed by the former President, Mr Trump.

Shortly after the telephone conversation, the Biden Administration expressed its strong support for the Nigerian candidature.